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EXDIS HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

FOLLOWING REPEAT JIDDA 8376 ACTION SECSTATE INFO DHAHRAN
CAIRO DEC 21.

QUOTE: S E C R E T JIDDA 8376

EXDIS

CAIRO FOR ATHERTON

DEPARTMENT PASS DOD, DOD FOR ISA, USMTM DHAHRAN

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, USA

SUBJECT: ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON DISCUSSES SAUDI ARMS REQUEST
WITH MINDEF SULTAN

REFS: A. JIDDA 7979 B. JIDDA 7224 C. JIDDA 6513

SUMMARY: MR. AHTERTON HELD A GENERALLY UPBEAT MEETING TODAY
(DECEMBER 20) WITH SAG MINISTER OF DEFENSE PRINCE SULTAN TO
DISCUSS SAG URGENT ARMS REQUEST. PRINCE SULTAN SEEMED TO
ACCEPT THE ARMS DELIVERY SCHEDULE OUTLINED VERBALLY AND CON-
FIRMED BY A LETTER FROM MR. ATHERTON (SEPTTEL) WITH ONLY
MINOR COMMENTS OR REQUEST FOR REVISIONS. THIS ISSUE--

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THE DLEIVERY SCHEDULE OF SAG URGENT ARMS REQUIREMENTS--

WAS A MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCK IN US-SAUDI RELATIONS. ON THE EXECUTIVE LEVEL, IT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN REMOVED. END SUMMARY

1. ON SATURDAY, DECEMBER 20, ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON MET WITH MINISTER OF DEFENSE SULTAN TO DISCUSS US-SAUDI MILITARY SUPPLY RELATIONSHIP AND OTHER MATTERS. (THESE ARE BEING REPORTED VIA SEPTEL.) MEETING LASTED TWO HOURS AND FORTY-FIVE MINUTES. MR. ATHERTON WAS ACCOMPANIED BY CHARGE HUME HORAN, CHUSMTM BRIGADIER GENERAL AHMANN, MR. JOSEPH HOENIG OF DSAA, AND POL/MIL OFFICER JESSE LEWIS.

2. MR. ATHERTON BEGAN BY SAYING THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER PARTICULARLY HAD ASKED HIM TO REVIEW WITH PRINCE SULTAN IN DETAIL STATUS OF OUR MILITARY SUPPLY AND TRAINING PROGRAMS. MR. ATHERTON SAID THAT PRINCE SULTAN WOULD RECALL THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER HAD CONVEYED A NUMBER OF DECISIONS ON THESE MATTERS TO PRINCE FAHD AND HIMSELF WHILE IN TAIF IN EARLY SEPTEMBER. SINCE THEN THE US GOVERNMENT HAD RECEIVED THE PRINCE'S LETTER OF SEPTEMBER 17 WITH FURTHER REQUESTS FOR SHORTER DELIVERY TIMES, DIFFERENT QUANTITIES, ETC. IT ALSO SEEMED TO US THAT IN SOME INSTANCES THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN A DEGREE OF DIFFERING INTERPRETATIONS AS TO PRESENTATIONS MADE DURING THE SECRETARY'S TAIF VISIT. SULTAN ASKED IF MR. ATHERTON WAS IN FACT SAYING USG WAS GOING TO CHANGE OR TO AMEND WHAT HAD BEEN HIS CLEAR UNDERSTANDING AND THAT OF OTHER SAUDI LEADERS AS A RESULT OF THE SECRETARY'S DISCUSSIONS IN TAIF? SULTAN POINTED TO A MEMORANDUM BEFORE HIM WHICH HE SAID WERE HIS AND PRINCE FAHD'S MINUTES OF THE DISCUSSION. THE PRINCE SAID HE BELIEVED HE HAD CONVEYED HIS UNDERSTANDING OF THAT MEETING TO THE AMERICAN EMBASSY AS WELL. MR. ATHERTON REPLIED THAT THE UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT, OF COURSE, STOOD BY WHAT WE HAD SAID. THERE WAS NO CHANGE IN OUR POLICY NOR IN THE OFFERS WE HAD MADE, BUT HE SAID IT WAS QUITE POSSIBLE, IN A DISCUSSION OF SUCH EXTENSIVE AND COMPLICATED ISSUES WITH SAUDI LEADERS, THAT SOME POINTS OF VARIANCE MIGHT AFTERWARDS ARISE.

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3. MR. ATHERTON EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THAT AN UNPRECEDENTED EFFORT HAD BEEN MADE IN WASHINGTON BY SECRETARY KISSINGER AND DEPUTY SECRETARY CLEMENTS TO BE RESPONSIVE NOT ONLY TO SULTAN'S REQUEST OF JUNE 15, BUT ALSO TO SULTAN'S ADDITIONAL REQUESTS OF SEPTEMBER 17. HE BELIEVED THE MAGNITUDE OF OUR EFFORT WOULD BE APPARENT TO SULTAN AS WELL AS THE CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS WE HAD HAD IN MEETING

THE SAG'S DEFENSIVE NEEDS. MR. ATHERTON EMPHASIZED, MOREOVER, THAT AS A RESULT OF WASHINGTON'S INTENSIVE AND HIGH-LEVEL REVIEW, A DECISION HAD BEEN TAKEN TO GIVE SEPCAIL PRIORITY TO MEETING SAUDI ARABIA'S DEFENSIVE NEEDS FROM PRODUCTION LINES OF UNCOMMITTED EQUIPMENT. IN ADDITION, OUR RESPONSE TO A NUMBER OF SULTAN'S REQUESTS COULD BEGIN PROMPTLY. SOME REQUESTS COULD BE FILLED IN THE VERY NEXT YEAR, AND OTHERS COULD BEGIN TO BE FILLED IN THAT TIME AS A RESULT OF DIVERSION OF SOME INITIAL DELIVERIES FROM CURRENT PRODUCTION OR EVEN FROM US ARMY STOCKS. THIS WAS TRUE OF SUCH TOP-PRIORITY ITEMS ON SULTAN'S LISTS AS HOWITZERS, APCS, M-60 TANKS, AND TOW MISSILES AND LAUNCHERS.

4. WITH PRINCE SULTAN'S AGREEMENT, MR. ATHERTON THEN SPOKE ABOUT THE SPECIFIC NATURE OF OUR RESPONSES TO HIS REQUESTS FOR SALES AND ACCELERATED DELIVERY OF EQUIPMENT. (ATH THIS TIME, SULTAN CALLED FOR HIS OWN RECORDS ON MILITARY SALES CASES, AND POINT BY POINT FOLLOWED MR. ATHERTON'S PRESENTATION BY REFERENCE TO HIS OWN FILES.) MR. ATHERTON TOLD PRINCE SULTAN THAT ADDITIONAL DETAIL ABOUT QUANTITIES OF EQUIPMENT AND THE SCHEDULING OF DELIVERIES WOULD BE PROVIDED AFTER THE MEETING IN THE FORM OF A WRITTEN RESPONSE FROM HIM TO THE PRINCE'S LETTER OF SEPTEMBER 17. (TEXT OF MR. ATHERTON'S LETTER IS BASED ON GUIDANCE PREVIOUSLY DEVELOPED IN COORDINATION BETWEEN STATE AND DOD. TEXT IS BEING REPORTED SEPTTEL.)

5. SULTAN MADE FEWER INTERJECTIONS N THE COURSE OF MR. ATHERTON'S PRESENTATION THAN MIGHT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED.
A) M-113 APCS: SULTAN WAS REASSURED TO LEARN THAT THE SAG WAS TO RECEIVE THE TOTAL NUMBERS OF ARMORED PERSONNEL CARRIER IT HAD REQUESTED (1104) AND TO LEARN THAT THE
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APPARENT DISCREPANCY BETWEEN THE US OFFER AND SAUDI EXPECTATIONS WAS THE RESULT OF DIFFERENCES IN MILITARY TERMINOLOGY. HE APPEARED SATISFIED, EVEN PLEASED, TO HEAR THAT THE SAG WULD HAVE IN ITS POSSESSION BY MID-1977 NO LESS THAN A TOTAL OF FORTY APC-TYPE VEHICLES, COUNTING THOSE ON LOAN WITH HOWITZERS.

B) M60-A1 TANKS: SULTAN SEEMED PLEASED BY OUR OFFER TO DELIVER TWETNY-ONE TANKS FROM SCHEDULED PRODUCTION IN THE FIRST AND THIRD QUARTERS OF 1977. IN RESPONSE TO HIS QUESTON, MR. ATHERTON CONFIRMED THESE WOULD BE OF THE LATEST MODEL AND EQUIPPED WITH LASER EQUIPMENT--AS REQUESTED BY PRINCE SULTAN.

C) LAW ANTI-TANK ROCKET: SULTAN WAS SATISFIED TO LEARN

THAT THE ENTIRE ORDER (5000) WOULD BE PROVIDED TO HIM OUT OF US ARMY STOCKS IN 1976, IF THE LETTER OF OFFER COULD PROMPTLY BE SIGNED.

D) TOW LAUNCHERS AND MISSILES: AFTER SOME DISCUSSION AND EXPLICATION. SULTAN EXPRESSED NO OBJECTION TO THE USG RESPONSE.

E) REDEYE ANTI-AIRCRAFT MISSILE; UPON BEING TOLD THAT PROBLEMS OF TEST AND SUPPORT EQUIPMENT DID NOT PERMIT US TO DELIVER REDEYE TO SULTAN UNTIL THE FIRST QUARTER OF 1978, SULTAN ASKED IF JUST A FEW MISSILES AND A MINIMAL QUANTITY OF TEST AND SUPPORT EQUIPMENT COULD BE PROVIDED SOONER. SULTAN SAID HE KNEW THE REDEYE WAS AN INTERIM WEAPON IN THE US ARMY AND IF THE SAG WERE NOT TO RECEIVE ITS REDEYES UNTIL 1978, THE US WOULD BE USING THAT MISSILE'S SUCCESSOR AND THE SAG WOULD BE FARTHER BEHIND THE TIMES IN INCORPORATING SUCH A WEAPON INTO ITS ARMED FORCES. MR. ATHERTON SAID WE WOULD LOOK INTO THIS QUESTION. (COMMENT: GENERAL AHMANN AND MR. HOENIG WILL DISCUSS THIS MATTER WITH DOD OFFICIALS IN LATE DECEMBER.)

6. MR. ATHERTON CONCLUDED HIS PRESENTATION BY TELLING PRINCE SULTAN THAT LETTERS OF OFFER FOR THE MAJOR OUTSTANDING ITEMS COULD BE PREPARED PROMPTLY IF HE AGREED,
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AND WOULD BE SUBMITTED TO CONGRESS AFTER THE END OF YEAR RECESS SOMETIME IN MID-JANUARY.

MR. ATHERTON SAID THAT

THE USG WAS PREPARED TO SEND A TRAINING TEAM TO SAUDI ARABIA IN EARLY JANUARY TO DELIVER UNSIGNED LETTER OF OFFER AND TO BRIEF THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE ON THE EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING NECESSARY FOR THE SAUDI ARABIAN ARMY SUCCESSFULLY TO ABSORB THE PROGRAM THIS EQUIPMENT REPRESENTS.

7. MR. ATHERTON SAID FINALLY THAT SUCH A LARGE-SCALE AND RAPID MODERNIZATION OF THE SAUDI ARABIAN ARMY WOULD REQUIRE INTENSIVE IN-COUNTRY TRAINING AND EXPANSION OF CONTRACTOR SUPPORT. HE SAID THAT IF WE ARE TO BRING ADDITIONAL PERSONNEL INTO THE COUNTRY AN ADEQUATE SUPPORT BASE AND ADDITIONAL HOUSING WOULD HAVE TO BE ESTABLISHED. PRINCE SULTAN BROKE IN WITH A SMILE TO SAY, YES, HE KNEW ALL ABOUT HOUSING. WHEN MR. ATHERTON SAID IT WOULD BE NECESSARY ALSO FOR THE PRINCE TO GIVE HIS EARLY ATTENTION TO CERTAIN OUTSTANDING USMTM SUPPORT CASES, PRINCE SULTAN SAID HE WOULD LOOK INTO THE MATTER PROMPTLY. IN MR. ATHERTON'S PRESENCE HE CALLED TO HIS

MILITARY AIDE TO PREPARE THE SUPPORT CASES IN QUESTION
SOON FOR HIS CONSIDERATION.

8. DURING MR. ATHERTON'S AUDIENCE THE AFTERNOON OF
DECEMBER 20 WITH KING KHALID, THE KING REMARKED HE HAD
BEEN INFORMED OF MR. ATHERTON'S MEETING WITH PRINCE
SALTAN AND HAD BEEN TOLD THE RESULTS WERE FRUUTFUL.
(PRINCE SULTAN ENTERED DURING THE AUDIENCE FOR A BRIEF,
WHISPERED CONSULTATION WITH THE KING BUT THERE WAS NOTHING
IN WHAT THE KING THEREAFTER SAID TO SUGGEST THE SAG WAS
DISTURBED WITH OUR PRESENTATION.) PRINCE FAHD (MR.
ATHERTON'S LAST APPOINTMENT DURING THE DAY) EXPRESSED
NO JUDGMENT ABOUT THE TALK WITH SULTAN.

9. IT IS THE EMBASSY'S IMPRESSION THAT THE HEIGHT OF
TENSION BETWEEN THE USG AND THE SAG OVER MILITARY DELIVERIES
IS BEHIND US. IN THE NEAR FUTURE, OUR DISCUSSIONS WITH
SULTAN MAY REVERT BACK TO MORE OR LESS NORMAL TONES OF
MINOR ACRIMONY AND GRIEVANCE. IT ALSO STRIKES US THAT

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AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF CURRENT ANTI-BOYCOTT AND ANTI-
DISCRIMINATION ACTIONS IN THE US (WHICH ARE RECEIVING MUCH
ATTENTION HERE), SULTAN MAY FEEL LUCKY TO GET WHAT WE
ARE OFFERING HIM. OUR OFFER TODAY MAY ACTUALLY LOOK
SOMEWHAT BETTER THAN IT WOULD HAVE LOOKED ONE OR TWO
MONTHS AGO.
HORAN UNQUOTE KISSINGER

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